

A Short Story By

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The writer by nature of his profession is a dreamer and a conscious dreamer. How, without love and intuition that comes from love, can a human being place himself in the situation of another human being? He must imagine, and imagination takes humility, love, and great courage. How can you create a character without love and the struggle that goes with love?

- Carson Mccullers

For no one.

1

It began as a simple mistake. As always.

This tends to happen after each break up I go through- I begin coming out of my shell again. The romantic in me dies and a socially obnoxious person arrives in place.

After having been away from everyone for so long, I went to the local bar in Richmond, Virginia that my coworkers frequent every Sunday. It's a loud place where people sing karaoke. I was in the middle of a conversation with one of them, David, at a table near the rest. I began telling him that I wanted to drink whiskey before my flight tomorrow to help me sleep through it. David leaned in close and projected his voice right into my ear, "Danny, you've gotta sneak some airplane bottles with you!"

"Is that even legal?" I asked.

“I'm not too sure, but I haven't had any issues doing it on the last 37 flights I've been on.”

“David?”

“Yeah?”

“Have you counted every flight you've been on?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay, well, fuck it. That's good enough for me!” I replied with.

A glass shattered loudly and everyone turned to look at a tall white man as he yelled at a girl, “THE FUCK IS WRONG WITH YOU?!”

She stormed across the bar and screamed back at him from the entrance, “You're such fucking MANWHORE!” The man chased her out.

“Wonder what that's about,” David said to me, “Shit, we've all been there. Chasing our girls down the streets, drunken arguments, and crappy apologies. Familiar ain't it?”

I got drunk and pissed off my coworkers with some things I said soon

after that. I don't know what I said and I don't think I want to. David had to drive me home.

7 a.m. came and I was awakened by the annoying iPhone alarm clock. I hit the off button, went to the bathroom, threw up in the toilet, and took a short shower. I ordered my Uber to drop me off at the nearest Greyhound bus station. With a not so bad hangover, I gathered my things in my backpack and got in the car when it arrived.

“Daniel Flocks?” The Uber driver asked.

“Yeah.” I replied.

“Bus station, right?”

“Mhm.” He was a black man in, what looked to be, his mid thirties. A few minutes of blissful silence went by, but I guess the Uber driver was eager to have a conversation.

“Where are you heading to?” He asked.

“LA.” I sighed out.

“LA? That's dope man!”

“Have you ever been to LA?”

“Nah, only Miami.”

“How's Miami?”

“It's amazing! The women out there are unreal!”

“I hear that.” I don't have a lick of interest in my body to ever go to Miami. The driver questioned if I saw the presidential debate on TV the night before, “No, I've lost all hope for our government.”

“I hear ya, bro. At this point we're better off having one of them A.I. computers as our president.”

I smiled after he said that.

2

The driver dropped me off at the bus station. There were homeless men outside, not begging for money, they were just looking for somewhere to lay. I went inside and saw dirty floors and people dressed in sweatpants. It was mainly black people and some hispanics in the lobby. I went to the bathroom to

pee, all the stools looked rusty and one of the toilets had shit all over it. Soiled water was leaking out of it onto the floor, it smelled like death! That was definitely one of the top ten most disgusting sights I had ever seen. I peed in a urinal that was angled towards the entrance, that way I could see anyone else who entered the restroom.

I was very cautious of anyone in the same vicinity as me (I carry many bad habits). I would be a bit anxious if I couldn't see a door in every room that I was in- I find even the nicest people suspicious.

After thirty minutes the bus came and we all got on. I sat next to this white man who looked to be about forty. The ride was a long one due to traffic on the 95 Highway. Once in Washington, D.C., I needed to take a train to the airport. The white man next to me on the bus noticed my frustration as I kept refreshing the Google Maps app on my phone. It had no connection, I let out a sigh.

“Hey, you alright, buddy?” He asked.

My first thought was that this guy needed to mind his own business, but in a polite manner I replied, “Yeah, just looking for the nearest liquor store around the train station so I can get some airplane bottles before my flight.”

“Oh, alright. What airport are you going to?”

“BWI.”

“Shit, I could go for a cheap drink too.”

“That's what I'm saying!”

“Can I come with?”

“Yeah.” We got off the bus at the train station and headed down a hill on E Street. While walking together, with our big bags bouncing around on our backs, we passed by plenty of business men and women. They looked down at us, as if we were some low life, low class peasants. Oh, how shameful of us to walk down the same streets as them, high and mighty with their nice clothes and high salaries! That's fine, though. I

would rather be perceived as a loser than work in Washington, D.C.

We entered the liquor store that was ran by an Asian man. We looked around the shop for airplane bottles, except we couldn't find any. I went up to the Asian man and asked, "Do you have airplane bottles?"

"Not here, sir."

"Damn, this sucks.."

The white guy I made friends with came up with a small bottle of Jack Daniel's, he bought it and we left the store. He and I passed the bottle back and forth in an alley near the shop.

He broke the silence, "Wait, when's your train?" He asked.

"12:20."

"Dude. It's 12:12 right now. The station is ten minutes away.

Motherfucker, go catch your train!"

With that, I ran.

3

I ran up that hill breathing heavily, continued to run through the doors of Union Station, and right up to the front desk to show the worker my ticket. She explained that the train was about to leave and pointed in the direction of where to go, “Right out that door you’ll see a train outside with a number seven on your left!”

I ran like a goddamn dork, as if I was trying to make it on time for the first day of school.

I sprinted to the first cart on train number seven, I jumped through the train doors and sat in the first open seat. As I breathed heavily and wiped the sweat from my face I thought about how dramatic that entire scene was.

A white woman sitting across from me stared with disgust in her eyes, “She probably doesn’t like Mexicans!” I thought, but I didn’t care.

Two minutes passed following the doors closing, a ticket agent started walking around checking everyone's ticket. When he arrived at me he asked, "Ticket, sir?"

I pulled out my QR code from my phone, he looked at it and said, "Ahh. You're on the right train, however, you're in the wrong cart, buddy. This is business class."

"Huh..."

I turned around staring into the other filled seats, all the people had nice clothes and laptops. It made sense now. That white woman wasn't just a racist lady. She was a RICH racist lady! Anyhow, I was guided to a different cart and quickly found another empty seat.

We arrived at the BWI airport. I went through security scanning as they checked my bag. My flight was to leave in an hour, so to kill time I sat near my gate and scrolled on my phone. I thought about Taylor, and how I'd like to call her right now to tell her about this whole dumb journey I've had so far, but

I can't. She blocked my number a long time ago, so that's not gonna happen.

People started lining up in their groups as they announced boarding. I looked in my bag, I looked and I looked, “FUCK!” I yelled. I never bought those airplane bottles.

4

The plane ride was ass. I fucking hate airplanes. Being in those things caused me a lot of stress. No matter how many times people explain to me how airplanes work, how they fly, and how they land, it will NEVER make sense to me. So many things in this world just don't make sense to me.

I entered LAX looking around and saw the hoards of people inside. LA was a Hell pit, but LAX felt like the seventh circle to me.

A random man was dancing in the middle of the lobby and all of a sudden threw up. I left to wait outside for my

mom and older brother to pick me up. They were so excited to see me, I missed them. Being away from my family is sometimes good. Once I get bored of the mundane lifestyle in Virginia it's fun to come back and deal with my dysfunctional family's bullshit in Los Angeles. Anyone without a dysfunctional family isn't authentic to me, luckily I think most of us are blessed with this curse. We caught up with one another during the drive to our mom's house. My mother and I spent the evening together, sitting in the kitchen and drinking coffee until 2 a.m. Ya know, the classic thing Mexican mothers love to do.

She was really sweet to me and prepped my favorite meals. I got drunk off some tequila she had. Then I made a backhanded comment to her, which caused her to go to bed to get away from me. The thing is, I don't remember exactly what I said that pissed her off, but how she felt wasn't important to me anyway.

The next day, my brother and I went out for breakfast with our dad. My

father was bitter about something in terms of his small business (he ran a pet shop in the city). My dad yelled at the waitress, I was too hungover to pay attention as to why. The waitress did look kinda dumb so maybe she deserved it.

After enduring what felt like the longest breakfast of my life, my brother and I went back to our mom's with a 12 pack of beer.

"Are you doing alright?" My brother asked me.

"Yeah, just tryna turn up after that one break up, ya know?"

"Well that's why we flew ya out here foo! You're always in that swampy ass state Virginia!"

"Yeah."

"Wasn't that relationship you were in long distance?"

"Kinda. I feel pretty stupid for getting involved in that."

"Well, it looks like you've been holding yourself up pretty well. At least you're not being all emo on me."

“Yeah, ya know I don't be all in my feelings like that. I ain't no pussy.”

“Damn straight you're not! You know why?”

“Why?”

“Cuz we *THUG* shit out over here.”

“I wish I was a thug.”

“You tryna shave your head?”

“Not today.”

My brother adds, “Ah shit, by the way, Chris wants to hang with you. He just hit me up like an hour ago.”

“Aight. Let's pull up to his place.”

“Fosho, lemme shower real quick.”

“Alright.”

5

We drove to Chris's place in my brother's car and when we arrived he waved, smiling at us through the doorway. Chris was a conspiracy theorist and sold weed illegally for money. We got out and Chris let us in. He was super stoked to see me again, but also seemed

to be high on something. Besides living with his mom, he seemed very happy. I think Chris had a codependency issue, just like many of us. For some people it's family, some it's porn, or others it's substances. I really loved depending on alcohol.

As we were in the living room my brother looked at his phone with a sigh, "Ahh shit. Hold up, Dad needs me to go check something out at the pet shop," and so he left without me. Chris and I stayed at his place and went into his room. Unlike his living room, which was very clean, his personal room had black out curtains and was very messy. He had beer cans on his gaming desk, an unmade bed, and a plastic bag laying on the floor with a bunch of tissues inside of it (most likely all the ones he had cummed on whenever he masturbated).

I thought to myself, "Damn motherfucker you live like this?" Truth is, I sometimes also lived like that.

He had a mini fridge and gave me a beer then we went back to the living

room. I asked him, “How ya been doing, man?”

“I've been chilling, dawg, I've been *REALLY* into podcasts lately.” He said as he opened his own beer.

“That's cool.”

“Yeah but people say it's controversial!”

“What's controversial about it?”

“Well, it has to do with the earth being flat.”

“Oh?”

“By the way,” he said, “The homegirl is coming over.”

“Who?”

“Alma...”

“Oh.” Alma was funny, argumentative, spoke like a dude, had big brown eyes, and overall, was okay company. She was also my ex. I don't really want to get into why we broke up, however we ended on good terms a long time ago, even though I never told her my true feelings. I would say Chris and Alma had a better relationship with each other than I did when I was with her.

Anyhow, twenty minutes went by and Alma came over and let herself in the door.

She said, “Hiii!!”

“Hey wassup.” We both said to her. She came up to me and gave me a light hug.

“How ya been?” She asked me as she sat herself down, “Long time no see.”

“I'm good, I'm just chillin.” I said.

“I heard you have a girlfriend.”

“We broke up about a month ago.”

“Oh, what happened?”

“I don't really wanna talk about it right now.”

“Why?”

“I just said I dont wanna talk about it right now.”

“Womp womp! C'mon tell me!”

“Heartbreaks are complicated.”

“Awww, did ya get heartbroken again?”

“You wouldn't know what that's like, huh?”

“Uhh and thank God I don't!”

“Yeah, thanking God, huh. Do you even pray, Alma?”

“Sometimes, when I need my car to work.”

“Does it work right now?”

“Nah, it hasn't started in three days. I don't know why.”

“Looks like you forgot to pray.”

“Maybe.”

“Nah, but you should get it checked out though.”

“I aint worried, I'll make an appointment with God soon.” She pulled out a container and started grinding up weed to smoke.

“You wanna smoke a blunt with me?”

“I don't smoke.”

“Bruh, you still don't smoke?”

“Nah, I've tried smoking weed hundreds of times but ya know I can't get into it.”

“Well maybe you should keep trying. Being high is better than being heartbroken,” she leaned back, rolling her blunt on the couch, “Shit, I think

that's the right kind of love, if there is any kind of love.”

Chris hit his beer followed by a loud burp, “Y’all don’t know shit! Love is not real!”

Alma hit her blunt, coughed, burped, then said to him, “So, you don’t believe in love?”

“I believe in *TRUE LOVE*.”

“Have you ever seen *TRUE LOVE*?”

“Yeah, sometimes in old couples when they’re cussing each other out in public.”

“What the fuck is this conversation?” I asked quietly.

“Right... Do you think that you could be capable of *TRUE LOVE*?”

“No.” Chris muttered.

“Why?”

“*TRUE LOVE* takes commitment, it takes time, patience, attention, most importantly vulnerability, and to be honest, that sounds like A LOT of work! I think I would rather swipe on tinder, beat my meat, and fall asleep.”

“You had me for a second there, but you're gross.”

I stood up chanting, “Alright! Alright! Let's go! Let's go! Let's get the hell out of here!”

“Where to?” Chris asked.

“I dunno, I'm the guest here!”

Alma coughed and with a soft tone suggested, “Let's go to Santa Monica.” While putting out her blunt in the ashtray.

6

We left his house and got into his Lexus, Alma sat up front with him. Surprisingly, for how messy his room was, the inside of his car was pretty clean. I got in the back and laid down, dozing off. A few minutes later I awoke to Alma yelling at Chris. I guess he was making an argument defending the earth being flat. “Chris! you sound really fucking stupid saying this shit!”

“Then why do they call it a tectonic plate? Huh? Dude, Plates are flat!” He declared, “THE EARTH IS FLAT!”

I yelled from the backseat, “What the FUCK are you talking about, bruh!”

“Sorry, dawg, I’m acting weird! I forgot to take my allergy medicine today!”

“Oh, is that what you call it?”

Chris looked at his phone while driving and said, “Hold up, bruh, I gotta go make a play.”

“Who are you delivering to?” She asked.

“The homie, Turtle.”

I sat up, “Oh shit, I know that fool Turtle!”

“Yeah he said he wanted to see you, dawg.” Chris drove through a red light while he looked at his phone.

I dozed off again in the backseat. There was so much traffic on the freeway that day. Twenty minutes went by and I woke up hearing Alma tell Chris a story.

“So, there we are, upstairs in this club. It’s me and my three friends, ya

know, the girls I'm always with. We a couple of bad bitches out and about! This man kept flirting with me that entire night. I wasn't interested in him, although I told the guy I'll give him a chance if he buys me and the girlies some drinks. He finally gave in and later on he bought us our drinks. We took them as we walked away but he began to follow us around yelling that I owed him and all this crap."

"Well, inna way you do."

"Yeah yeah, So he starts going up to my friends cursing at them. Luckily it was Bucket Night that night."

"What's Bucket Night?"

"Basically they give you this small plastic bucket with ice that has a couple shooters inside of it."

"Ahh, airplane bottles..." I say to myself while listening.

"Well, there was a bucket on a table nearby and the ice had melted, so it was just a bucket of water sitting there, and he was still harassing my friends."

“So did you throw the water on him?”

“No.”

“So did you grab him by his-”

“Lemme finish my story! So I dumped it over his head from behind! As I pushed the bucket down onto his head-“

“Did he take it off and try to fight you?”

“No bro. look, here's the thing- I guess, I didn't realize he had a small ass head so the bucket ended up getting stuck on him. He couldn't see a damn thing. He got confused, took one step, and fell down.”

“No way that happened!”

“No, no, I'm telling you the truth! It was straight outta some *Looney Toons* episode. We ran out after that!”

“Is that what bad bitches do on their nights out?”

I sat up, looked out the window from the car and saw a tall bridge over the riverbed. I thought about ending my life on one of those bridges about four

years ago. We took an exit and arrived at Turtle's apartment.

7

Turtle came out and picked up weed from Chris's car. Turtle leaned into the window, "What y'all bout to get up to?"

"I'm taking these fools to Santa Monica. We gon post up out there for a minute."

"No shit? Me and the homies about to go to a bar near the beach inna hour or two. Y'all should come through!"

"Alright, for sure." Chris drove off. I sighed out loud very noticeably.

"What's wrong dude?" Chris asked.

"I don't want to meet new people."

Alma then spoke in an annoying tone, "You're always like this, dude. Just get out of your comfort zone!" Then she hit a new blunt.

“How about you get out of your comfort zone,” I clapped back, “and stop smoking weed all the time?”

“Yeah, I’ll stop smoking once you buy a car, dickhead!”

We arrived at Santa Monica Pier walking around aimlessly. After a short bit I went off by myself to stare out into the water. I was so annoyed by everything: the noise, the people, the warm weather. I prefer the cold. The quiet. I prefer being with Taylor in a cold city like London. I remembered how it felt to be with someone whose company I didn’t get annoyed by. I thought about her often. I was able to get away from her in my mind every now and then, but the thoughts would come creeping back like some sort of consistent rash. It sucked balls being back here having to endure all the stupid conversations I found myself in.

“YO, Danny!” Chris hollered when he found me, “There’s a monkey doing card tricks in this one shop nearby.”

“I don’t really care.”

“Aw come on, don't be like that.
Think about the monkey!”

“I just wanna chill somewhere and
drink, bro.”

“We'll get to that, but we wanna go
look around first.”

“Go without me.”

“What's wrong with you?”

“I'm just annoyed by everything.”

“Like what? Monkeys?”

“No! It has nothing to do with the
goddamn monkey! It's everything else!!
Especially all these fucking people
around here.”

“You're so judgemental, man. So
many people here are just happy. Living
life!”

“Whatever,” I walked off. “I'll
catch y'all later!” I went to a dive bar
alone.

An hour passed and Chris finally
texted me the bar to meet everyone at- I
got there a little late and slightly buzzed.

8

It was a dark bar with 80's music playing. The hispanic bouncer checked my I.D, looked me up and down with one raised eyebrow, "Daniel Flocks?"

"Yeah."

"That's a white ass name for a Mexican."

I went over to Chris, Turtle, and Alma. They were with a big group at a table, half were standing, half were sitting. Turtle comes up to me and says to everyone, "YOO! This is the homie Danny! He's a good homie!"

Everyone introduced themselves. All of them were pretty sweet, I was simply uninterested. I saw Alma leave with some girl to go to the bathroom for a bump of coke. I sat at the table with a girl named Elizabeth Mail and some guy named Steven. Elizabeth seemed very smart because of the way she spoke. She was just one of those people, intelligent. Ya knew smart people, not when you saw them, but once you heard them.

You'll know when you hear it. Steven on the other hand, not too sure. He had a slight Chicano accent and was focused on trying to show memes to Elizabeth on his phone. Then he said to me in a serious tone, "Hey, Danny."

"Yeah?"

"You seem smart."

"Okay?"

"So you're not stupid, right?"

"I don't think I am."

"Look man, ya see all these people here?"

"Yeah?"

"Don't you see how many idiots are walking around nowadays?"

"Yeah I do."

"Ya know why?"

"Why?"

"Because they're all globe-sexuals."

"What?"

"Ya heard me."

"Uh."

"THESE MOTHERFUCKERS
REALLY THINK THE EARTH IS
ROUND!"

“Um.”

“You’ve heard of the flat earth theory, right?”

“ ... ”

“Well it isn’t a theory. Look bro, I gotta put you onto this podcast I’ve been listening to.”

I stood up immediately then walked away towards the bar to get a beer. There were a bunch of people sitting around the bar. Luckily, one seat in between all the people was free for me to sit in. I sat down and I waited for one of the bartenders to notice me. While waiting I listened to some people's conversations that were happening around me. To my left was a group of women. A blonde one said, “No, no, your dreams do have meanings!”

“I don't think they do.” The other woman replied.

“Tell me,” the blonde lifts up her phone, “you think it's a coincidence you never see your phone in your dreams?” Ugh. Another person talking about the meaning of dreams. As if our dreams ever had meanings.

I decided to eavesdrop on the two men talking on the right side of me. One said, “No offense, but it sounds like all the work you do at your job is stupid.”

“All work is stupid.” The other man replied.

The bartender came and I got a shot of tequila with a Miller Lite. Alma came up to me, “Hey, whatcha doing sitting here alone?”

“Just go be with them. I know how you like attention.”

“Wow okay, you're being really aggressive today.”

“Don't you have some coke to do?”

“Don't you have some bitch to be crying over?”

“Oh my gawd.”

“Ya know what? Fine. Be a bitch.”

“Don't say that to me! You know how I feel about that word.”

“NAH! I'm going to say whatever I want!”

“Can you go?”

“Whatever. Sorry I hurt your feelings, Danny!”

She walked away and suddenly a short bald man came up to me, “Hey, you're that motherfucker!”

“Huh?”

“You're the motherfucker who flirted with my girl yesterday and kept talking about her asshole!”

“WHAT THE FUCK?!”

“Stop playing like you don't know me, with your stupid long ass face!”

“I don't know who the hell you are!” He pulled at my shirt as I stood up. I could tell he regretted his decision after seeing I was a foot taller than him. He looked to be about barely five feet tall. He wasn't built either. He pushed me and I slapped him with my right hand then hit him with my left fist.

He felled down to the ground as I told him, “Get the fuck up, little boy!”

People came to help pull us away from one another, as the bouncer dragged him out, the short man yelled, “IMMA FUCKING KILL YOU!”

Chris with his friends run up to me, “What the fuck was that about?”

“I dont know!” I snapped at them,
“Goddamn! Thanks for no help, all of
you!”

“Chill out, how the fuck were we
supposed to know some shits happening
with you when you're here tryna be
alone?” I walked away and sat down
again, but this time further away from
everyone and ordered two shots of
tequila along with two beers.

I've had it today, I was over it.
These stupid conversations and idiots all
over the city. I was over all of it! I
planned to drink the night away.

9

I woke up on a random bench, the
street lights were bright, but it was really
dark out. My ears had some sort of eerie
ringing. I slid off the bench, walked a bit,
tried to check my phone, unfortunately
it was dead. I looked up and saw the
street lights were moving. Waving. I

took a few more steps as the road started tilting from left to right, like I was on a boat.

“What the fuck is going on?” I questioned myself. I started running, tripped, and looked up to see every cloud moving in the sky. I moved on for a minute, walking along the sidewalk. As I looked up again, the clouds were still moving, however this time centering towards me. I ran but the clouds kept catching up to me. I hit my face on a street light pole, fell to the ground, and stayed there. I tried to look towards the sky, but everything was swaying. It was overwhelming.

“Wait, what the fuck is going on with me?” I whispered. Suddenly, an epiphany hit me like a bullet. I know what’s going on now, I’m experiencing a bad trip! I hadn’t consumed anything besides some beers along with two tequila shots. A couple minutes went by and the stars aligned, “I’ve been laced!” That’s what it was, I concluded.

But, by who?

I was going to solve this mystery one way or another, even if it means I had to sit here til I pissed myself. I thought maybe it was one of the people at the bar stools, though it couldn't have been them, they were all too preoccupied with themselves. At this point, I thought about the short bald man from earlier who threatened to kill me, on the other hand there was no way in hell his short ass could have even reached my drinks. Unless he had a ladder, maybe.

“OH MY GOD!” I knew who it was. The culprit: Chris. “THAT MOTHER FUCKER I’LL KILL HIM!” He was probably pissed off that I didn't want to hang out with his stupid ass friends.

I was convinced of that for a few seconds, but I realized that it wouldn't have made any sense. Since he only sells weed he couldn't have laced me with marijuana, at least I don't think that would've worked. So I guess it wasn't him. “Ahh I know who!!”

It was Alma! She does coke! She probably has other kinds of shit on her

all the time. She must've drugged me! it was the only thing that made sense!

CASE CLOSED.

“THAT FUCKING BITCH!!”

Finally, I stood up from the ground and walked into the middle of the street, attempted to check my phone, got angry, and threw it on the ground. I tried staring into the dark streets, looking around the neighborhood I was in, though it was too dark to focus.

I heard a loud noise from a car nearby. I looked where the sound came from and saw these headlights at the corner of the street. The car turned hard, burned rubber, and rushed straight towards me! Loud screeching sounds came from the tires as it was braking, with the driver door perfectly in front of me. It was Chris's Lexus. The door opened hard, hit my body, I stumbled but was still standing.

I saw who came out of the car. Speaking of the devil, that witch, it was Alma.

10

“COCKSUCKER!” she hissed. With a perfect punch she hit me in my throat. I fell straight to my knees with a hand wrapped around my neck. Goddamn, when did this bitch take some boxing lessons? She yelled at me, “WHAT YOU DID TONIGHT WAS REALLY FUCKED. YOU FUCKED UP BIG TIME!”

I got up wobbling and coughing. I spit as I yelled back, “WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! YOU FUCKING DRUGGED ME!”

She slapped me across the face. I almost fell over again, “You stupid idiot, no one drugged you! You blacked out again!”

“SHUT UP, BITCH! I KNOW YOU DRUGGED ME!” I launched towards her but she was faster and moved slightly to the left. Tripping on my own feet, I fell over again. This time I scraped the palms of my hands and a bit of my chin on the concrete. I could feel the blood dripping from my chin.

She kicked me in the stomach,
“STUPID IDIOT!!”

“Why are you doing this to me?!”
As I screamed this a little bit of puke
came out.

“You dumbass, you don't
remember?!”

“NO!”

“You went around the bar taking
random people's drinks! You told Chris's
friends that he has a porn addiction and
that sometimes his cum went on the
weed he sells. You also told everyone
that I have a bad diarrhea problem!”

“I don't remember!” I yelled, as
she kicked me again.

“No fucking shit you don't!
YOU'RE A DUMB LITTLE BOY!”

“Don't call me that! I'm a man! I'm
older than you PUTÁ, I'm a real man
worthy of respect!”

“OH REALLY?” She kicked me
again but this time harder than the
others! I screamed and rolled over with
my back on the pavement. She hovered
over me as she whispered, “I don't care
how old or tall you are. You're nothing

but an insecure little man to me.” She pushed my head to the ground as the back of my skull hit the pavement.

I lifted myself up to push her away rolling over onto my hands and knees yelling, “Screw you! Stupid fucking bitch, I don't know why the hell you're still in my life!”

“At this point I don't either, dickhead!”

I stood up trying to keep my balance, wobbling. “I know why. Its because you wanna fuck all my friends!”

“WHAT!” She roared.

“Yeah, yeah! I know that's the reason!”

“Oh my fucking god!” She rushed over to me pushing my body against the car as she kicked my nuts. I let out this weird grunt like an alpaca being shot on a farm in the middle of the night and being left to die alone. She pulled my hair, “Listen here dumbass, I don't like any of your friends. Matter of fact, I dislike almost all of them. All your homies are annoying, insecure wannabes hiding behind their stupid

tattoos and their slang words they love to use. They're weak minded boys. You weren't always like them, though. It seems like somehow that virus they have has spread onto you now."

She let me go. I faltered, staring into her eyes quietly.

"You are weak, Danny. You are so fucking weak." She shoved me again. I stood there silently. I've never heard anyone speak to me like that before, not even by my father, and he would always let me have it.

I asked her quietly, "Did I really do all that shit?"

"Bruh. You think I'd make all that up?"

"Maybe..."

"Well no, I didn't make it up and everyone wants to beat your ass."

"Really?"

"Uh, yeah really! Chris was so pissed off his friends had to pull him away from you! I don't know where they took him, but that's why I'm driving his stupid ass Lexus."

"How did you find me?"

“We’re only three blocks away from the bar.”

“Oh.”

“I'd stay lowkey for the next couple of days if I were you. Who knows what they're gonna do to you.”

“Damn, I pissed everyone off that much?”

“What's the matter, are you feeling bad?”

“Yeah.”

“You’re a bitch.”

“I shouldn't be around people.”

She projectile spat towards the ground, “Maybe if you weren't so selfish, there wouldn't be such negative consequences.”

“You think I'm selfish?” I asked.

“All you care about is yourself.”

I stayed quiet. Pondering. Maybe she was right, I usually don't feel guilty about the things I've said in the past. In my mind I'm always the one who's correct. But this time I know I took it too far. I didn't just say things, I did things. I fucked up. She was telling the truth. I could hear it in her voice.

I stared down looking at my feet saying, "Um, um."

"WHAT!" She screamed.

"I-I'm sorry." I looked up to her eyes. They were shiny and big as always.

Quietly she whispered to me, "Are you fucking serious?" She slapped me across the face again, "Don't look at me with those puppy eyes. Say what you mean like a man. Your life isn't some goddamn movie!"

"Yeah, I know. You're right." As hurtful as her words were, a part of myself appreciated the brutality of being brought back to reality, yet it still cored me.

She moved me aside as she entered the car. I stared at her. She sat there looking at the road with her hands on the wheel for a few seconds, took a deep breath, turned on the car, then drove off.

I went walking somewhere, along the way I ended up on some boulevard. Somehow, there was a bus still in service at this time of night. It stopped right in front of me, I got on and didn't pay for

the fare. The bus driver saw how dirty and bloody my face was, he didn't bother to confront me.

There was only one old couple on the bus sitting together. They just stared at me. I saw their eyes meet mine, only once, while I seated myself. But I could still feel them staring into me. Their eyes stuck to me like glue. I wondered what they saw. Why? Why would they bother looking towards me? Can they see? Can they see through the skin, the hair, and this ugly long face of mine that I am nothing?

11

I don't remember what happened next, but I was alive and it was morning. I woke up on a bench in a parking lot with hundreds of metro buses near LAX. Here I am in the seventh circle of Hell once again.

I really needed to take a shit, so I got up, walked towards the airport, went inside, and got into one of the

bathrooms. It was one of those hot burning shits. Whenever you drank too much it had to come out one way or another. This route isn't that bad, in my opinion. I think it's better shitting out all of your regrets from the night before rather than them coming out of your mouth.

But it still hurts like hell though.

I washed some of the dry blood off of my hands into the sink then left the bathroom. I looked around for a water fountain then walked back outside. I listened to the loud planes taking off and stared at the buses in the lot.

I was slightly upset as I walked around the sidewalk near the airport doors. It was frustrating me how I had forgotten the buses as well as the route I needed to take to get back home.

I wandered around for a while. I noticed this black woman who was dressed in pink, skinny, and seemingly pissed off talking on the phone. It sounded like she was having an argument with a family member. She came up to me and asked me if I knew

where the metro buses were, so I took her to them. She asked me where I was from and I told her that I was originally from LA but currently living in Virginia. I was visiting some family here and had no idea how to get back to my mom's. She told me to tag along with her. Luckily she lived in Compton, which was somewhat near where my mother's place was. So we sat together on a random bus.

I asked her what her name was, "Jazmin." she said.

"Daniel."

She nodded, "Daniel, may I ask what happened to you?"

"What do you think happened to me?"

"Looks like you got an ass beating."

"Yeah, a bunch of dudes at a bar picked a fight with me last night."

"Oh. You're a troublemaker, huh?"

"Only on the weekdays."

"I wonder if you deserved it."

"Oh I definitely did." The bus ride went on and we sat in silence for a

couple minutes. She asked what I was doing at the airport so early, I told her I got lost last night. She opened a pack of gum as she handed me a piece. After that I asked her, "Where did you fly out from?"

"I was visiting my girlfriend in Miami."

"How was that?"

"It was cool, but it sure was intimidating. The women out there are unreal!"

"I've heard about that."

"Yeah, she and I are doing long distance at the moment."

"Ah, I know that's hard."

"Yeah, have you ever been in a long distance relationship?"

"Just got out of one."

"Oh I'm sorry, has it been easy for you?"

"Sure has." Probably by looking at me once she could tell it actually hasn't been easy. Especially after last night. She pulled out a notebook then wrote, "DANIEL: LAX. BUS/MORNING." with a date next to it.

“What are you writing?” I asked.

“A little note for later. I write a lot.”

“Are you an author?”

“Nah, self proclaimed poet.”

“Oh, poetry?”

“Mhm.”

“How often do you write 'em?”

“Almost daily.”

“Goddamn. Daily?”

“When you're blessed with a crappy life, you tend to have a lot of material to write about.” She handed me one of her poems to read. It was an easy read. Not too complicated or confusing. It was straight to the point. I wish more writers wrote like that, just straight to the point. Maybe then I could get into reading or writing.

“You should write a novel!” I told her.

“Nah, poetry is the only thing worth writing.” Jazmin seemed wise. She reminded me of that girl Elizabeth from earlier.

A couple of minutes went by. I stared at the scabs on my hands.

Reflecting on the ass beating I got last night. She asked me if I was okay, I told her no. We stayed silent for a couple more minutes.

“It’s gonna get better.” She told me.

“It hasn’t.” I replied. I looked out the window and saw the riverbed. It was one of those tall bridges I saw from earlier again. I thought about ringing the bell, stopping the bus, and just getting it over with. I wrestled with those thoughts. I decided I didn’t have the guts.

Not today.

She poked me. As if she read my mind, “You’ve thought about doing something stupid recently, haven’t you?”

“...”

“Look I don’t know you, but you seem alright.”

“I’m not,” I muttered, “I’ve got nothing.”

“I don’t believe that.” She stated, “Everyone’s got potential. I used to think that way too. But you got something to you. Everyone does.”

“Yeah everyones got something. Mine just happens to always be covered in bullshit.”

“This whole earth is covered by bullshit, but there's beauty hidden inside of it. There is beauty growing out of the manure in the places you least expect it. You just gotta look for it, baby.”

I looked out the window, “Ya know, even though it's summer and the sky's been bright lately. This place has a gloomy filter over it. Especially in the mornings, maybe it's the smog.” I shared with her.

“Maybe it's how you've been seeing things.”

Maybe she was right.

She asked me what I was gonna do later that day. I told her I'm going to stay home, drink, and never come out. “You don't have friends to drink with?” She asked.

“Not anymore.”

“I'm assuming they're all mad at you?”

“Something like that, but it doesn't matter. I'm headed back to Virginia in three days.”

“At Least you won't have to worry about the friends over here once you're back out there.” She could sense my sadness. I felt truly alone despite her there. She tapped my shoulder as she spoke to me, “Hey man, life is short. Whatever you did yesterday was yesterday. Let it go.”

“I'm the worst at letting go.”

“You can always reinvent yourself.”

“I doubt that,” silence passed over us. “Short and meaningless is life,” I told her, “Lackluster. I don't really find a point in changing anything or even trying. Ya know?”

“Life is short and meaningless. That should be your motivation to do more.” She looked at me seriously, “Hey. Look at me, as long as you're breathing and moving. Don't do anything except to find more excuses to live a longer life. Ya got it fucker?”

I smiled after that, “Okay.”

I always loved when someone made something so wholesome a little crude or edgy by adding some curse words thrown here and there. She got it. She was cool. She was that bitch.

But what she said actually spoke to me. Not just in that moment, but onward. I held onto those words, like a rope to pull on. I was ready to form new habits.

She tapped my shoulder and pointed to the street we were heading to. She ripped out one of her poems from the notebook and gave it to me, I put it inside my pocket.

“Come on, Danny.” She pulled my arm, “Get up. You're about to miss it!” We stood up, hit the stop button, and the driver hit the brakes with a hard stop. I almost tripped, but I gripped onto one of the handle straps as I regained some balance. I've had enough of falling and eating shit these past twenty four hours. I wasn't gonna let it happen again!

The doors opened! I hopped outta there, stood on the sidewalk, turned

around and stared at her. She stayed inside and was behind that window glass looking at me, she gave me a light smile. The doors closed. The bus slowly moved back onto the street, her and I locked eyes for a moment, finally they broke contact.

I looked down at the cuts on my hands then felt the note that she gave me in my pocket. As the bus drove away, I realized I forgot to say-

Thank you Jazmin.

For poetry by steven
Ig: stephenundereagles

For art by Nazarine
Twt: Map11has2names1